



June 27, 1995

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Honorable Susan Ness  
Commissioner  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

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Re: Satellite Digital Audio Radio  
Gen. Docket 90-357, Rm. No. 8610

Dear Commissioner Ness:

In response to the Federal Communications Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking No. 8610, Infinity Broadcasting of Chicago, licensee of WUSN-FM, Chicago, Illinois submits the following comments on the proposed licensing and service rules for Satellite Digital Audio Radio ("DARS"). WUSN-FM parent corporation, Infinity Broadcasting Corporation, may submit its own comments in this docket prior to the comment deadline, but this letter is submitted to reflect the local perspective of WUSN-FM on the issue of Satellite DARS.

As General Manager of Radio Station WUSN-FM, I am writing to express my concern about the significant impact that Satellite Digital Audio Radio ("DARS") and the licensing and service rules for DARS to be drafted by the FCC will have on WUSN-FM and its listeners in the Chicago area. WUSN-FM, along with others in the broadcast industry, supports the Commission's attempts to make technological advances like digital radio available to listeners nationwide. It is important for the Commission to understand, however, that the decisions it makes in bringing about technological changes will dramatically alter the local marketplace for radio stations nationwide and are almost certain to have a negative effect on the ability of local broadcasters such as WUSN-FM to serve their communities of license.

As you know, a radio station's basic FCC obligation is to provide the station's community of license with programs to meet its needs and interests. Currently WUSN-FM provides listeners with local news and weather reports, disaster warnings, numerous public service announcements, traffic reports and weekly programs such as "Chicago Up Close" (Sunday, 7A-9A), which addresses issues of concern to listeners in the Chicago

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metropolitan area. In the future, however, if WUSN-FM is forced to compete for advertising revenue with 60 new state-of-the-art Satellite DARS "super stations" in our market, WUSN-FM may also be forced to dramatically reduce or eliminate many of these local public affairs programs and community outreach efforts. Given the fixed costs of operating a radio station in a highly competitive market such as Chicago, any loss in national advertising revenues to satellite super stations, however small, will have a significant impact on WUSN-FM's overall profits and our ability to serve local needs.

Although proponents of Satellite DARS will argue that WUSN-FM's listeners in the Chicago area will continue to tune into the station for local information, the Commission needs to understand that local radio stations like WUSN-FM survive on ratings alone. Our station needs listeners to tune in for a set amount of time each day in order to keep our ratings at a level sufficient to attract local and national advertisers. If 60 new satellite super stations are introduced in the Chicago area, listeners are likely to tune into existing broadcast stations like WUSN-FM only for local information, as needed, thus causing our ratings to drop dramatically along with our revenue and our ultimate ability to remain financially viable. Due to the fact that the Commission's existing ownership rules limit single entities to the ownership of, at most, only four stations in a market, existing operators like WUSN-FM have their "hands tied" by regulations even if they want to compete with satellite operators who will have 60 stations in every market.

As the Commission considers service and licensing rules for Satellite DARS, it should keep in mind that there are a number of ways to minimize the impact of satellite radio on existing community-based broadcasters such as WUSN-FM.

First, the Commission should remove existing national and local ownership limits on terrestrial broadcasters to allow a station like ours to compete fairly with satellite radio by allowing in-band on-channel terrestrial digital radio to be licensed first to determine if Satellite DARS is even needed. Third, satellite radio ventures should be prohibited from using ground-based equipment such as terrestrial repeaters to reinforce their signals in urban areas where satellite signals are often blocked. Fourth, Satellite DARS licensees should be required to carry the niche programming (such as service to rural listeners, minority and ethnic groups) they have promised the FCC they would offer. Fifth, Satellite DARS services should be subscription-supported so that operators have an economic framework to permit delivery of niche programming to specialized or geographically dispersed markets. Sixth, because they are functionally equivalent to broadcasters, DARS operators should be subject to the same public interest obligations as broadcasters, including but not limited to reasonable access and equal opportunity provisions. Finally, in order to ensure that Satellite DARS is implemented in a manner

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that preserves and augments existing local radio, the Commission should allocate 50% of available frequencies to existing radio broadcasters or should open the DARS proceeding to allow new applicants.

WUSN-FM looks forward to working with the Commission as the broadcast industry moves into the digital age. At the same time, WUSN-FM urges the Commission to take into consideration the realities of the existing broadcast marketplace as it moves towards bringing technological advances to listeners of our station and other stations nationwide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen D. Ennen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" being more prominent and the last name "Ennen" following in a similar style.

Stephen D. Ennen  
General Manager  
WUSN-FM/US★99 Radio

SDE/nlp